

## Earth Day is

recognized on April 22, 2026, and this year's theme, [Conscious Consumption](#), encourages us to reflect on how our everyday actions support a sustainable future. Recognizing this day in early learning and child care programs builds on an opportunity to promote the learning goal of personal and social responsibility from *Capable, Confident, and Curious: Nova Scotia's Early Learning Curriculum Framework (NSELCF)*. When we highlight personal and social responsibility during Earth Day celebrations, we help children connect with who they are, how they belong, and what it means to care for each other and the land.

## Caring for the planet

is a universal value recognized across diverse communities. The knowledge system of Netukulimk emphasizes living in balance with the earth. The Kwanzaa principles of Kuumba and Ujima remind us to leave our communities better than we found them and to value collective work and responsibility. The Gaelic belief in sithichean (fairies) and the tradition of assigning language to animals and giving them human-like qualities offers a way to better understand the interconnectedness of all living things.



## Invitations and Provocations

**Outdoor Exploration:** The NSELCF reminds us that outdoor learning spaces are critical environments for early learning. They offer a vast array of possibilities not available indoors.

**Reflect:** How are children currently showing care for the world around them? What moments help them explore where plants, foods, and insects come from?

**Plan:** Invite children on a slow, curious walk around the outdoor play area or a nearby green space, if available. Encourage them to notice how these spaces are changing as the new season arrives. What insects do they notice more of? What is happening to the elements?

**Observe:** Notice how children respond to the changing environment. Who notices seasonal changes? What signs of the new season do children point out (e.g., buds, melting snow, changing light)? What kind of questions/comments are children asking/making?

**Loose Parts Sensory Sorting:** The NSELCF notes that although learning materials easily found in nature such as sticks, rocks, and leaves are usually familiar, and seemingly simple, they enhance children's learning when introduced in novel, interesting, and thought-provoking ways.

**Reflect:** How do children respond when natural and recycled materials are offered together? What messages about care, responsibility, and fairness have children been engaged in?

**Plan:** Create a sensory bin with a blend of natural and recycled objects. Invite children to slowly explore the items—feeling textures, noticing differences, and discovering how each material might impact the earth differently.

**Observe:** Notice how children explore and sort the materials. What do they recognize as helpful or harmful? How do their comments reveal developing ideas about caring for the Earth? What language do they use when talking about reusing, recycling, or reducing waste?

**Community Care Check-In:** Educators can promote personal and social responsibility by using outdoor learning spaces to build capacity for self-care, and respect for self, others, and nature, as noted in the [Educator's Guide](#).

**Reflect:** In what ways do you model care for shared outdoor spaces? How do you encourage children to notice the impact they have on the natural environment?

**Plan:** Choose a special spot outdoors—such as a garden bed, pathway, or gathering space. Engage the children in simple sustainability practices such as picking up fallen branches, gently clearing debris, checking for signs of new growth, or creating a small habitat space (e.g., leaving a log for insects). Introduce conversations about how people in a community share responsibility for taking care of the places they use and enjoy.

**Observe:** Watch for how children show connection and care for their community place. Do they notice when something has changed? How do their words or actions demonstrate an emerging understanding of sustainability and community responsibility?

*Inquiries about this resource can be emailed to the Sector Development and Partnerships team at [ECDSERVICES@novascotia.ca](mailto:ECDSERVICES@novascotia.ca).*